

In Serving The Wicked Expect No Reward:

**A Belated Obituary For The
Forgotten Hero Of British "Anti-Fascism"
Richard David (Dave) Roberts (1949-82),
"Searchlight" Agent Provocateur And
Instigator Of The Column 88 Nazi Underground Hoax**

2nd Printing

Dave Roberts The Forgotten Hero Of "Anti-Fascism"

The name Richard David Roberts is not one which springs readily to the lips of "anti-fascists" nowadays, much less to their minds. Those "anti-fascists" who have minds. Yet in 1976, Dave Roberts secured his fifteen minutes of fame in the annals of anti-fascism, and he did it in a particularly bizarre fashion, by his conviction for conspiracy to assault the staff of an Indian restaurant.

Who was Dave Roberts? Richard David Roberts was a dedicated communist, a man who was totally committed to all the well-worn and totally vacuous communist slogans such as liberty, equality, fraternity, workers of the world unite, and, boringly, no platform for fascists.

Dave Roberts didn't just hate fascism, he loathed it with every fibre of his being. Such was his loathing that he believed any means justified the end, the eradication of fascism, and fascists. The son of communist parents, Roberts was himself a member of the Communist Party, then of the Appeal Group, which was formed in 1971. While in the Appeal Group he used the party name Beria. (1) Roberts was married with a child, but his dedication to the cause of "anti-fascism" was not matched by his devotion to his family, and his wife Pauline divorced him for persistent cruelty. (2) In 1975, he joined the National Front in his native Birmingham under the name Marshall, and, according to one source, began setting up phony right wing paramilitary groups. (3) Someone who met him only once, but was *au fait* with his activities, said that Roberts conned and screwed his way through the entire political spectrum. (4)

Whatever cons Roberts may have pulled for financial gain, there can be no doubt about his commitment to "anti-fascism", and after he had successfully infiltrated the Front and cast around Birmingham's lunatic Nazi fringe, he pulled the biggest con of all in conjunction with the then editor of *Searchlight* magazine, Maurice Ludmer.

One particular bunch of Hitler cultists at this time called themselves Column 88, after a long defunct Austrian Nazi outfit of the same name. The leader of this highly secretive group was a man named Les Vaughan, who was clearly a bit of a dodgy character but was by no means as sinister as he was later to be made out to be by Roberts' manipulators. The most terrible allegation ever substantiated against him was a conviction for carrying a firearm. (5) He was also said to have been a member of Colin Jordan's National Socialist Movement. (6) Other characters involved with Column 88 were a prison officer, and a school caretaker with a handlebar moustache who liked to parade around in military uniform and coal scuttle helmet. (7)

In spite of Column 88's supposedly fanatical obsession with security, Roberts had no difficulty in joining the group. This was a man who was not only using an easily checkable false name but was a known communist activist, remember. Roberts attended a number of meetings of Column 88 which were reported in *Searchlight* magazine and the press, (8) but in spite of attempts to make them sound sinister in the extreme, all the participants did was talk, and celebrate Hitler's birthday. So seriously was the threat of this *Führerfest* taken by the authorities that it was even raised in the House of Commons. Special Branch were asked to investigate it, but why the police, much less the secret police, should be interested in something like this, has never been satisfactorily explained.

Roberts and Ludmer fed stories about Column 88 to the national press, in particular, a gullible *Telegraph* journalist, the late Peter Gladstone Smith. In April 1975 the *Western Daily Press* was the recipient of Column 88 fan mail, which, rather than from Roberts, probably came from a member of the group. (9)

Roberts' infiltration of the extreme right was going very smoothly, and, in due course, he and Ludmer may well have duped some of the more gullible "Nazi" extremists into committing criminal acts so that their evil machinations could be exposed in *Searchlight*. (Under the later editorship of Gerry Gable, this has become a standard *Searchlight* gambit). However, before they could engineer something of that nature, Roberts himself ended up under arrest.

One fine night in July 1975, Roberts was out drinking with two right-wing extremists, David King and John McLaren, when, as they just happened to be passing a communist book shop called *Key Books*, they decided to burn it down. Not Roberts of course, but his associates. Roberts told them this wasn't such a good idea and feigned illness to cop out of it. As by this time in common with his companions, he was well stoned, this didn't require much feigning. Unfortunately, the police happened by, and they were all three arrested, and, rather than being charged with conspiring to burn down the book shop, were charged instead with conspiring to assault and rob the staff of an adjoining Indian restaurant, *The Bombay*. (10)

On the last day of the trial, Roberts' fellow conspirators were so remorseful, impressed with his sincerity or whatever, that they both handed letters to the judge confessing their own guilt but absolving him. Roberts' fantasies carried some weight with the judge, who said he did not entirely disbelieve his story. (11) Nevertheless, the jury were less easily swayed and all three men were convicted, although Roberts escaped with a suspended sentence. (12) The following year, Roberts served his suspended sentence after he assaulted National Front members on a demonstration. (13)

It was not however the prosaic facts of three pissy arses convicted of conspiracy to beat up a group of Indian catering workers, but the bizarre revelations of Roberts' other activities which stole the show. Roberts handed over to the authorities twelve to thirteen hours of covertly recorded tapes and made all manner of allegations against his drinking pals and others. His story was serialised in *Searchlight*, which sang his praises loud and long. Maurice Ludmer also praised Roberts' courage in the Birmingham press. Mr Roberts was very brave, he said, and he hoped that the "information" he had obtained would alert people to the dangers of such groups. (14)

Roberts became a founder member of the Provisional Anti-Fascist Committee, and, together with his lover, Daphne Liddle, contributed to a short lived, hysterical anti-fascist journal called *Forewarned Against Fascism*. In one issue of *Forewarned*, the stark warning was given that fascists were "WINNING the war". Column 88 was said to be above the law and safe from arrest. Roberts called on the authorities to arrest its leaders and the leaders of the Eleventh Hour Brigade (15) under the *Public Order Act*, and ban all fascist marches, meetings and literature. "Only then" he added, "could violence on a large and ever escalating scale be avoided." Needless to say, the government didn't, and the ever-imminent race war hasn't yet arrived. (16)

Although there was an attempt to lay some minor terrorist activity at the door of Column 88, (17) the organisation faded back into the oblivion from whence it had come. In 1984, arch-liar Ray Hill claimed to have been a member and even produced a membership card, (18) but Hill, like *Searchlight* controller Gerry Gable, lies practically every time his lips move, and Column 88, as far as it had any existence at all, was dead and buried by the time he appeared on the scene. In any case, it never issued membership cards. (19)

After his first trial, Roberts spoke with great apprehension about the future. He was said to be a marked man, perhaps he would have to leave the country? In reality, as well as a prison sentence and a short spell as Daphne Liddle's live-in lover, he decided to make a living poncing off members of the Appeal Group. (20) Although he never seemed to work for a living, he was never short of money, and it was rumoured that among other things he used to trade (dis)information with Spe-

cial Branch officers in gay bars in Birmingham. (21) After a short spell living rough in the wilds of Kent with only a Bowie knife to defend himself against the fascist hordes, he somehow managed to wangle himself a course at Staffordshire Polytechnic, (now University). The Svengali-like, Machiavellian Roberts even became President of the Students' Union, and active in internal politics. He died suddenly in 1982; he was said to have suffered from a heart condition, but liberal use of tranquillisers, alcohol, and his inveterate chain-smoking may well have had something to do with his premature death.

Maurice Ludmer died in May 1981, in its July issue *Searchlight* published a virtual hagiography including dedications from public figures. When Roberts died, the following obituary appeared in the local press:

Students' president dies

"Students Union president Dave Roberts died last week, aged 33.

Mr Roberts, of Sandon Road, Stafford, had been president of the North Staffs Polytechnic SU for about 12 months. A post mortem was carried out and the results showed he died of natural causes.

He was the driving force behind the campaign to save the Polytechnic's Madeley site from closure, the latest achievement, fixing an interview with William Waldergrave, Minister for Higher Education." (22)

He was actually thirty-two, not thirty-three. This is the only obituary the current writer has been able to find of this working class hero and valiant anti-fascist who risked life and limb to save Britain from the hordes of Column 88. One would have expected his death to have been reported in *Searchlight*, if not in the same grandiose fashion as Maurice Ludmer's, then at least a paragraph expressing sorrow for the passing of a comrade. Alas no, not even a sentence. The last time Roberts was mentioned in the magazine was the August 1981 issue. By this time, Gable and his fellow hate-mongers were already working with another, and far more promising "mole", Ray Hill. This issue carried an exposé of the spurious Notting Hill Carnival bomb plot. Tucked away on the back page was a little notice which proclaimed:

"We wish to make it clear that Dave Roberts is not and never has been a member of *Searchlight's* editorial group and is in no way associated with the work of the magazine. Some years ago he came to us with his story, which we ran; in return for expenses he offered to compile an index for us as he was unemployed and waiting to go to college. In the last few weeks it has come to our notice that Roberts has been taking advantage of Maurice Ludmer's death and has been contacting journalists and anti-fascist activists using *Searchlight's* name. He is not connected in any way with the magazine, nor would we wish him to be."

Veronica Ware - Editor

Gerry Gable - Former Editor.

These are clear, blatant, provable lies. One can only guess why *Searchlight's* controllers decided to dump their working class hero, the current writer has his own speculations, but neither they nor the real reason are important. What matters is the moral of the story.

There is a fable by Aesop about a crane who helps a wolf. The crane is flying by when the wolf, who has a bone stuck in his gullet, cries out to him, promising him a fine reward if he will only stick his long bill into the wolf's jaws and remove it. After some hesitation the crane does so, and, perhaps to his surprise, removes his head intact. When though he asks the wolf for his reward the ungrateful creature tells him unceremoniously to clear off. "You've already had your reward by being permitted to remove your head intact from the jaws of a wolf," he growls. The moral of this fable is of course: "In serving the wicked, expect neither reward nor gratitude, but be thankful to escape with your own neck for your troubles."

Dave Roberts didn't just help the wolf, he did so voluntarily, stuck his head all the way in, and his reward was to become the forgotten man of British "anti-fascism". He didn't even warrant a kind word in death. Surely someone could have thought of something kind to say about him? Maurice Ludmer did, even the *Searchlight* team wrote a long piece in his defence when he was sent to prison for assaulting National Front members. But as always, this was because it served their own purposes.

Daphne Liddle, Roberts' former lover, still works for *Searchlight*, taking photographs here and there. Liddle is a committed anti-Zionist, which does strike one as a bit strange since generally anyone who doesn't kiss the arse of Imperial Zion will automatically be branded anti-Semitic by this despicable magazine. There can be no doubt though that when Liddle has served her purpose, she will be shit on in exactly the same way Roberts was. A lot of anti-fascists found this out after the Sabra and Shatila massacres. These were people, among them Ken Livingstone, who had fought anti-Semitism tooth and claw along with the mythical evils of *racism, sexism and homophobia*. When they saw the Israelis treating the Palestinians the same way the Nazis had treated the Jews, they condemned Zionist atrocities just as vigorously as their predecessors had condemned Kristallnacht. (23) Their reward was to be smeared as anti-Semitic. Ken Livingstone was even referred to the Attorney General by the Board of Deputies of "British" Jews for publishing the cartoon on page 5.

Zionism, like Nazism, is a form of fascism. To call *Searchlight* a Zionist publication is too simplistic; it has other agendas besides doing the dirty work for Organised Jewry, but ultimately, like all the other servants of Imperial Zion, it is loyal only to its masters, and uses people for its own ends. Not just gullible *goyim* like Dave Roberts and Daphne Liddle, but the Jews whose suffering - real and imagined - it wails and whines so loudly about, and whom it professes to defend against a world which has nothing better to do than incite hatred and violence them. To paraphrase Robert Wistrich, *Searchlight's* brand of anti-fascism is the epitome of "an inhuman, repulsive, treacherous and ruthless movement animated by an evil essence and a remorseless drive for power." (24) It lies, smears, uses every dirty trick in the book, and lobbies tirelessly to destroy Western Man's freedoms, his institutions, and ultimately, Western Man himself. For this reason it must be exposed. And destroyed.



Above: The Board of Deputies of "British" Jews had the audacity to refer this cartoon to the Attorney General. It was published by Ken Livingstone in the short lived newspaper *Labour Herald*. What sort of slime and lowlife would brand a raving "anti-racist" loony leftist like Livingstone an anti-Semite? Alas, like Dave Roberts, he got the reward he deserved.

Notes And References

- (1) He was said to have had a somewhat sardonic sense of humour.
- (2) Roberts was married on October 28th 1967 and his wife, Pauline Beryl Roberts was granted a decree nisi on October 31st 1972.
- (3) Private information.
- (4) Private information.
- (5) *Searchlight*, July 1985, issue 121, page 3.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Page 224, *THE OTHER FACE OF TERROR: Inside Europe's Neo-Nazi Network*, by Ray Hill with Andrew Bell, published by Grafton Books, London, (1988).
- (8) The Column 88 scam was reported in a number of issues of *Searchlight*. See in particular: *COLUMN 88 THE STORY OF BRITAIN'S UNDERGROUND NAZIS - A SEARCHLIGHT EXCLUSIVE*, May 1975, pages 3-6; *EXPOSE* and *MR. R.S. MARSHALL AND THE N.F.*, May 1976, pages 2-4 and pages 12-3; *THE ROBERTS STORY part two*, June 1976, pages 9-11; *THE ROBERTS STORY part 3*, July/Aug, 1976, pages 6-8. Read these articles with a bit of savvy and you'll be amazed at how little they contain. Most of Roberts' allegations were either later refuted or proved impossible to substantiate.
- (9) The following are the earliest reports of Column 88 in the press. They were clearly engineered by *Searchlight*, or in the case of the *Western Daily Press* articles, milked by the magazine's controllers for all they were worth.
 - Hitler birthday party uncovered*, by Peter Gladstone Smith, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, April 6, 1975, page 3.
 - Riddle of Hitler festival in West*, by Michael Macklin, published in the *Western Daily Press*, April 7, 1975, page 1.
 - Lid stays on*, published in the *Guardian*, April 21, 1975, page 1, (London edition only).
 - New riddle of Nazis' camp on West farm*, by Michael Macklin, published in the *Western Daily Press*, April 29, 1975, pages 1 & 7.
 - Special Branch sees Hitler letters*, by Michael Macklin, published in the *Western Daily Press*, April 30, 1975, page 5.
- (10) See *The Roberts Story*, (footnote 8).
- (11) In other words, not even Roberts lied all the time.
- (12) *Court frees man who "spied on Hitlerites"*, by Anne McHardy, published in the *Guardian*, March 25, 1976, page 24.
- (13) *DAVE ROBERTS JAILED - Documents of Original Trial Show Innocence*, published in *Searchlight*, issue 26, page 7-9.
- (14) *"Nazi tapes" man in hiding after death threat*, by Bill Ludford, published in the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, (FINAL EDITION), March 25, 1976, page 37.
- (15) Another mysterious group which like Column 88 were later blamed for a letter bomb campaign. See for example *Police get lead to origin of London parcel bombs*, by Stewart Tendler and Robert Parker, published in the *Times*, April 6, 1978, page 2.
- (16) The authorities thoroughly investigated all Roberts' claims and several reports appeared in the quality press which dismissed them in their entirety. See for example: *"No Evidence" of TA-Nazi "goings on"*, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, May 12, 1976, page 3. Here, the Minister of State for

Defence dismissed Column 88 as "a small drinking club of neo-Nazi nut-cases." And *OFFICER WAS NAZI* published in the *Sunday Telegraph*, May 16, 1976, page 3. Here, the Minister revealed that one former "Nazi" had been involved in exercises in the Savernake Forest the previous October. He had now been dismissed. He was an acting under-officer in the Army Cadet Force. This was the sum total of the threat to democracy.

(17) See previous footnote for example, also *Parcel bomb sent to Asian car worker*, by T.A. Sandrock, published in the *Daily Telegraph*, April 7, 1978, page 2.

(18) Hill made this claim in the fictionalised documentary *The Other Face of Terror* which was screened in March 1984.

(19) Private information.

(20) Private information.

(21) Private information.

(22) *Staffordshire Newsletter*, June 11, 1982, page 7.

(23) The Zionist treatment of the Palestinians has in fact been far, far worse than the Nazi treatment of the Jews, prior to 1941 at any rate. The persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany was almost entirely economic, and physical excesses - "individual acts" as they were called - were severely punished by the government. The Nazis never dynamited peoples homes, and they certainly never murdered their children in cold blood, as the Israelis have done under the *intifada*.

(24) Page 4, *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, Edited by Robert S. Wistrich, published by Macmillan in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs, London, (1990).

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